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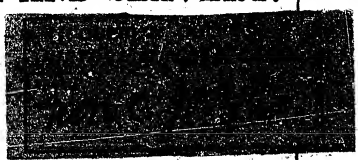
E. H. Tyler

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY:



A REVIEW OF

DOCTORS FULLER AND WAYLAND,

ON

DOMESTIC SLAVERY.

BY

WILLIAM HAGUE.

BOSTON:
GOULD, KENDALL & LINCOLN,
59 WASHINGTON STREET.
1847.

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY:

A

REVIEW

OF THE

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

RICHARD FULLER, D.D.
OF BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA, AND

FRANCIS WAYLAND, D.D.
OF PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND.

ON

DOMESTIC SLAVERY, CONSIDERED AS A SCRIPTURAL INSTITUTION.

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PREFACE.

More than a year had elapsed after the publication of the work containing a correspondence between the Rev. Drs. Fuller and Wayland, and entitled, "Domestic Slavery, considered as a Scriptural Institution," before the author of the following pages had any thought of writing a review of the controversy.

Having long been a sincere admirer of Dr. Wayland as a writer, a philosopher, and a teacher, he could not but regret the more deeply, on that account, the position taken by him, as to the manner in which primitive Christianity treated slavery; but then, he had no doubt that some of his brethren more immediately connected with the periodical press would do justice to that main part of the discussion. No such review, however, has appeared.

Some time since, at a social meeting of the Boston Conference of Ministers, the writer was led to express his disappointment as to this matter, and to state his view of the scriptural argument. He was appointed by the

Conference to prepare an article on the subject, to be read at a succeeding meeting. This was done, and the publication of the following Review was called for by a unanimous vote. In compliance with the wishes of his brethren, therefore, the author commits it to the press, under the full belief, that if its doctrine be true, the effect will be good; and, on the other hand, that if its doctrine be erroneous, the error will be made manifest, and that some few, at least, will become wiser by the discovery.

Boston, March 24, 1847.

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY.

Domestic Slavery, considered as a Scriptural Institution. In a Correspondence between the Rev. RICHARD FULLER, D.D., of Beaufort, S. C., and the Rev. FRANCIS WAYLAND, D.D., of Providence, R. I. New York: Lewis Colby. Boston: Gould, Kendall & Lincoln.

WE have before us a remarkable book. In the lapse of ages, it will probably be regarded as an instructive fact in the history of Christian civilization, that in the nineteenth century, in the Republic of North America, — famed through the world as the asylum of the oppressed and the home of liberty, — two Christian ministers, distinguished for piety and learning, united in the common work of sending the gospel to the Pagan nations, should have felt themselves called upon to engage in an earnest discussion of the question, Whether Christianity sanctions slavery; or whether the continuance of that relation between master and slave, which involves the acknowledgment of a right on the part of one man to hold the body and mind of another man as property, is compatible with the principles of Christianity, — with the letter or the spirit of its law? Nor will the extraordinary character of this event be at all diminished by the consideration, that both of the disputants belonged to the denomination of Baptists, who had been often known in the world as the advocates of religious liberty, —

asserters of the inalienable rights of the human soul; who, in the darkest ages of Romish tyranny, declared with a martyr-spirit, before kings and magistrates, that one fundamental doctrine of the new dispensation, "that conscience should be free, and all men be permitted to worship God as they are persuaded that he requires;" and who, in different centuries, have been the persecuted champions of the great truth, that the Bible alone is the binding rule of religious faith,—that to its possession every man has a right, as by it every man will be judged.

Yet the volume before us furnishes proof that such a fact has transpired; that, after all that has been written, even by avowed infidels, in praise of Christianity, for its effects on the social condition of man; after all that has been done to elevate the poor and the oppressed; after all that it has taught respecting the common origin and the common redemption of the race; after all the prophecies which it has held forth, through many centuries, touching the design of God that mankind shall form a common brotherhood; after all the evidence which theologians have urged in proof of its being a divine revelation, drawn from its influence on the abolition of slavery,—it is still boldly asserted by a Christian minister, that the essential principles of the slave-system itself Christianity does not reprobate, but that a man may claim to be by right the sovereign lord and owner of his fellow-man, and yet to be his brother in Christ, and faithful in the discharge of all the duties which are enjoined by "the new commandment." Such is the position of Dr. Fuller; a position which we aver to be built on the sand, to have no foundation in the teachings of the

New Testament; a position such, that, if it were true, would show that the "old commandment" of Judaism, which abolished slavery, was better than the new commandment of Christianity, which allows it; would show that Christianity was not fit to win its way through all the tribes of men, as a universal religion; would show, in spite of all its pretensions to miraculous evidence, that as yet the MESSIAH OF ANCIENT PROPHECY, the Messiah of man, the Deliverer of the oppressed, the Desire of nations, the preacher of "liberty to the captive," has not come; and that, with the Jew, we must take our place of lowly waiting for the "Consolation of Israel," and the Promised seed in whom "all the families of the earth" are to be blessed.

Eloquent as is Dr. Fuller in argument and appeal, fervent as is the religious spirit which he breathes, earnest though he is as a preacher of pardon to the sinner, yet, by advocating such a doctrine of slavery as an element of Christianity, he has done greater disservice to the cause of religion and humanity, than could possibly be achieved by all the traffickers of human flesh whom the laws of Christian nations now condemn as pirates. We say this in sorrow, not in anger; for to express one's deep, calm, solemn conviction of a terrible truth, is not at war with the law of kindness. The actual dealers of slaves, of whom we speak, avow their profession to be that of rapacity; their motive to be the love of gain; and it is impossible for them to corrupt public sentiment, as may the Christian teacher. They commit a great sin; but to misrepresent Christianity on this subject is to take away the remedy for sin. They bring thousands of their fellow-

creatures into bondage; but to make men believe that Christianity sanctions a system of bondage which thus begins, is to cut the sinew of all the moral power in the world which can destroy that system. They can affect the opinions of society but little, because they are abhorred as the enemies of their race; but the minister of religion is revered as the interpreter of the divine will. They can do nothing to erect the bulwarks of the law around their trade in men, and around the markets whose demands they supply; but he does very much to rear a legal defence around a scheme of oppression, and to perpetuate a social wrong on earth, "which hell itself might shrink to own." What though it be said that in him God may account it as an error of judgment, and not a sin of the heart? Be it so; but charity to the man must not conciliate us to his error. We must still declare it to be an error; and, with the New Testament in our hands, must say to the most amiable of men, "Though you, or an angel from heaven," preach this doctrine as a part of Christ's gospel, we pronounce the sentiment to be wicked, inhuman, antichristian, and "accursed."

In speaking thus, we are far from denouncing, indiscriminately, all those who stand in the legal relation of slave-holders, as unworthy of being regarded as Christian brethren; for a man may hold this relation, in a legal sense, against his own consent. He may deem himself the victim of misfortune; he may feel bound to avail himself of his legal power, for the protection of his brethren; and especially he may, before God, as a Christian man, abjure all right and title to his fellow-men as property. Such a man, though

nominally master of a thousand slaves, is more truly a philanthropist, and more worthy the fellowship of the universal church, than is the Northern Christian who never saw a slave, and still declares that Christianity sanctions slavery. The former is a slaveholder in name, but not in truth and in spirit; the latter is called a non-slaveholder, but a change of residence would make him an owner of men and women, and he is now a slaveholder in principle, in feeling, and in guiltiness. The author of the Sermon on the Mount assures us, that God judges men, not merely according to their overt acts, but according to the intents of their hearts, — the objects of their approval or abhorrence.

Hence we have been deeply interested in the argument contained in these letters, conducted by a leading writer of the South and another of the North. Not being of those who would say, "This discussion belongs to the realm of abstractions; it is better to let it alone, and to deal only with facts;" we deem the discussion itself as a fact of the highest moment. For ourselves, we have not been aware, till recently, how extensively the opinion defended by Dr. Fuller prevails among Southern Christians,—how far they have departed from the purer doctrines of their fathers. We supposed that, to a wider extent than seems now to be the case, they had agreed with us in believing that Christianity entirely condemns the slave system; and that in proportion as their influence in the state was increasing, the day of emancipation was hastening on. We had often thought of them, as lacking a proper degree of zeal in the work; as being timid and tardy, and too subservient to the schemes of worldly

politicians; but we had never believed them so generally to have embraced a corrupt doctrine, to have perverted the high principles of Christianity, and to have been pressing into the support of slavery a religion which came into the world "to comfort the broken-hearted, to lift up those who were bowed down, to break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free."

While there are many things in these letters incidentally thrown out on both sides, which may be worthy of notice at some time, we wish now to consider the main question proposed, and the way in which it is treated.

The main question is, Does Christianity sanction slavery? Dr. Fuller asserts the affirmative in the clearest terms. He says: "I find my Bible condemning the abuses of slavery, but permitting the system itself." Page 4.

"The matter stands thus: the Bible did authorize some sort of slavery; if now the abuses admitted and deplored by me be essentials of all slavery, then the Bible did allow those abuses." Page 10.

"Slavery was everywhere a part of the social organization of the earth; and slaves and their masters were members together of the churches; and minute instructions are given to each as to their duties, without even an insinuation that it was the duty of masters to emancipate. Now I ask, could this possibly be so, if slavery were a 'heinous sin'? No! every candid man will answer no!" Page 12

"I put it to any one whether the precepts to masters, enjoining of course their whole duty, and not requiring, not exhorting them to emancipate their slaves, are not conclusive proof that

the apostles did not consider (and as a New Testament precept is for all ages, that no one is now justified in denouncing) slave-holding as a sin." Page 194.

From these citations it is evident, that the argument of Dr. Fuller, as to the teaching of the New Testament, rests on two points:

1. The fact that the relation of master and slave was recognized throughout the civilized world, by the law of the Roman empire.

2. The silence of the New Testament, as to the duty of dissolving that relation.

This argument has respect, *necessarily*, to the slave system recognized by the Roman law, which was then so extensively supreme, because there is no evidence that our Saviour or the apostles ever came in contact with slavery under the Jewish law. Among the people of Palestine, involuntary servitude had been brought to an end, hundreds of years before the Christian era, by the natural operation of the code of Moses. Every slave bought of the heathen received the offer of freedom at the end of every seventh year, if he were a Jewish proselyte; and whether he were a Jewish proselyte or not, the jubilee trumpet sounded forth the decree of liberty at the close of every half century. The passage quoted by Dr. Fuller, from the xxv. chapter of Leviticus, which forbids the purchase of bondmen from any except the heathen and strangers, saying: "Of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids, and ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever;"* must be understood, in consistency

* Verse 46.

with the law of the jubilee, which had been laid down in a preceding part of that same chapter,‡ which says: "Thou shalt cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound, on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land; and ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto ALL THE INHABITANTS THEREOF: it shall be a jubilee unto you: and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and every man unto his family."* Such was the law of jubilee; limiting the sales of men, as it did the sales of land, whereof it said: "According to the multitude of years after the jubilee, thou shalt buy of thy neighbor; according to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it:" when, therefore, another law enacts that bondmen shall be purchased of the children of the heathen, instead of the children of Israel, it must be understood that the purchase is modified by the previous law, and that the meaning of the latter statute is not the entail of perpetual slavery on any class, but simply the confining of the Jews in the purchase of servants, always and for ever, to the children of the heathen.

If there were any doubt on this point, our interpretation of the meaning of the law would be confirmed by considering the fact, that the inspired prophets treated the continuance of slavery as inconsistent with the spirit of the Mosaic precepts. In saying this, however, we do not mean to intimate that they ever had occasion to denounce any kind of oppression possessing the

* Verses 9, 10.

character of American slavery; for nothing like that could have existed a single day in Palestine after the entrance of the Israelites. American slavery originated in kidnapping men and women from Africa; but this was the only kind of *theft* which the law of Moses made a capital crime. "He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be *found in his hand*, he shall surely be put to death" (Ex. xxi. 16). The man-stealer, and the man-seller, and the slaveholder, were alike liable to capital punishment. The Mosaic law would have always prevented the slavery of the United States, and would destroy it instantly now, if put in operation. In Palestine, war, debt, poverty, and voluntary contract, originated, at different periods, a servitude which was temporary, the periodical abolition of which was provided for by law. Against this abolition, avarice would naturally revolt, and seek to evade the law for the sake of gain. On this point the Prophet Isaiah lifted up his voice like a trumpet, instead of treating it as a subject too delicate to be mentioned, "cried aloud and spared not," saying, "Behold, ye fast for strife, and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye *break every yoke*?"* If the churches of the South should make proclamation of a fast like this, who would doubt that it involved the emancipation of the slave, and that this would be a fast most acceptable to God?

Similar in spirit is the language of the

* Is. lviii. 6.

Prophet Jeremiah in regard to an effort on the part of the covetous rulers of that day, to renew the bondage of the *Hebrew* servants after they had been released. See the xxxivth chapter, from the 12th verse onward. "Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother, a Hebrew who hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee; but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. And ye were now turned and had done right in my sight in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbor, and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name. But ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return and brought them into subjection unto you, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. Therefore thus saith the Lord: *Ye have not hearkened unto me in proclaiming liberty every one to his brother and every man to his neighbor:* behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, and to the pestilence, and the famine, and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, and I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, into the hands of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and their dead bodies shall be meat unto the fowls of heaven and unto the beasts of the earth." And thus it was. Je-

rusalem was plundered and burnt, and the Babylonish captivity made short work with the remnants of Jewish slavery, which had resisted the spirit of the Mosaic institutions. It is with good reason, therefore, that Mr. Barnes, in his work on slavery, reaches the conclusion, that "slavery altogether ceased in the land of Palestine," and asks, "On what evidence would a man rely to prove that slavery existed at all in that land in the time of the later prophets, of the Maccabees, or when the Saviour appeared? There are abundant proofs that it existed in Greece and in Rome; but what is the evidence that it existed in Judea? So far as I have been able to ascertain, there are no declarations that it did, to be found in the canonical books of the Old Testament, or in Josephus. There are no allusions to laws or customs which imply that it was prevalent. There are no facts, no coins or medals, which suppose it." Page 226.

Corroborative of this position is the fact, that the pictures of life and manners contained in the four gospels are not in harmony with the supposition of the existence of slavery among the Jews. In the parable of the prodigal son, which delineates the condition of a rich land-holder, the term to denote *servants* is μισθιοι, from μισθος, a reward, and is properly rendered, hired servants. This word could not be applied to a slave. In the parable of the shepherd, in John x. the word μισθωτος, from the same root, is used, and is translated "hireling." The same word is employed for the servants of the fishermen, in the beginning of Mark's gospel. There is not furnished to us in the New Testament, or any contemporary history, the least vestige of a reason for believing

that our Saviour or the apostles ever came in contact with slavery in their native country.

If this be so, there is very good reason why no instance can be cited from the gospel, of our Lord's rebuking the sin of slavery by giving a command enjoining emancipation. He uttered precepts adverse to all sin and all systems of wrong, but rebuked only the specific evils which fell under his notice. Hence we read nothing of his condemning the caste of India, the sports of Roman gladiators, or the vices of the theatre, which were censured even by the Pagan moralists themselves. No argument, therefore, can be drawn in favor of slavery from the lack of any specific rebuke of it in the teaching of our Lord. In his day, the Jewish law, instead of sanctioning any form of slavery, had already extirpated it from the land.

Important as is this distinction between the social state of Judea and of the Gentile world, between the operation of the Jewish and of the Roman law, it is altogether overlooked by Dr. Fuller, and it does not appear that Dr. Wayland has given to this point any particular attention. Its bearing, however, on the main question, is direct and momentous.

We now revert to the position of Dr. Fuller, that the Roman law established slavery; that the scripture addresses those who held the relation of master and slave, and is silent as to the duty of emancipation. To this assumption Dr. Wayland readily concedes, remarking, "I think it must be evident that the precepts of the New Testament furnish no justification of slavery, whether they be considered either absolutely, or in relation to the usage of the Roman empire at the time of Christ.

All that can justly be said, seems to me to be this: the New Testament contains no *precept* prohibitory of slavery. This must, I think, be granted; but this is all." Page 89.

The mode in which the new dispensation is supposed to have borne upon the slave-system is thus expressed by Dr. Wayland: "By teaching the master his own accountability: by instilling into his mind the mild and humanizing truths of Christianity; by showing him the folly of sensuality and luxury, and the happiness derived from industry, frugality, and benevolence, it would prepare him, of his own accord, to liberate his slave, and to use all his influence toward the abolition of those laws by which slavery was maintained. By teaching the slave his value and his responsibility as a man, and subjecting his passions and appetites to the laws of Christianity, and thus raising him to his true rank as an intellectual and moral being, it would prepare him for the freedom to which he was entitled, and render the liberty which it conferred a blessing to him, as well as to the State of which he now, for the first time, formed a part." Page 100. But this statement of the case, it appears to us, falls far short of the truth, and grants a great deal too much; it involves a concession, which gives to the scriptural argument of his opponent an appearance of strength which it does not really possess. It is yielding to the advocate of slavery an advantage, which, in Dr. Fuller's hands, has been made to take on the aspect of a triumph. All the world confess that Dr. Wayland is an elegant writer and a strong reasoner: but the strongest reasoner cannot *create* truth; the highest result that he can achieve, in a discussion like

this, is to use effectively the elements of truth and power with which reason and revelation have furnished him. But after such a concession as this, we cannot conceive it to be within the scope of the human intellect to impart to the scriptural argument against slavery an appearance of great strength. To give it force and poignancy, to direct it with quickening and commanding energy to the conscience of the slaveholder, is impossible. Hence, when Dr. Wayland is borne along by the course of his reasoning within the realm of philosophy, or utters in our ears the appeals of a Christian philanthropy, our hearts answer to him; we feel the potent spell of "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," and bow ourselves with reverence before the majesty of truth. But when he speaks as an interpreter of the Bible, on this subject, seeking to give voice to the teachings of Jesus, he seems to have been "shorn of the locks of his strength," and to appear before us as another man. What he says is well said, but the moral effect is weak. The utterance of God's revelation is feeble and tremulous, compared with the clear, bold, and awful propositions of philosophy. "The mind of Christ," on a practical matter, of the deepest interest to humanity, for all time, is made obscure to the view of an earnest inquirer; and though our Lord is seen to be, in fact, befriending the right side, yet he speaks to us "as the scribes," and not "as one having authority." Who can avoid such an impression as this, on perceiving that the reply to Dr. Fuller's claim of a scriptural sanction, which fills several pages, contains a beautiful exposition of the true doctrine of expediency; of the difference between opposing a deeply-rooted and or-

ganized evil, by positive enactments, and by the inculcation of a great principle which shall work like leaven and gradually subvert it; of the superior wisdom of the latter method; and then urges a defence of the apostles for tolerating slavery as a social evil, on the ground that, by this subtle and effectual method, they sought to accomplish its extinction? If the Christian doctrine "hath this extent, no more," it will be very slow in the work of delivering the American captive; and our regret, therefore, on reading such a statement of it, has been increased by perceiving that Mr. Barnes has taken substantially the same position.

But in all these exhibitions of the scriptural doctrine, we doubt not that there is a cardinal mistake; and that mistake is in defining the relation denoted by the words "servant" and "master," δουλος, and κυριος or δεσποτης, by the law of Rome instead of "the law of Christ." In the community of Christians this latter governed all relations. For unto whom were these three epistles of Paul and one of Peter, which contain the passages referred to, originally addressed? To the world at large? No. To the subjects of the Roman empire, as such? No. To men, as men and citizens? No. They were addressed to little communities of Christians voluntarily united as churches, as those who were "called to be saints," "the faithful brethren in Christ;" to those who had "come out from the world and been separate;" to the regenerated, baptized, and sworn subjects of the Messiah's kingdom; to those who had received, as their first lesson, the doctrine that, unless they could willingly give up "houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands" (or ser-

vants), "for their Lord's sake, they were not worthy of him;" to those, and those only, who, having been "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise," had now been "brought nigh by the blood of Christ, who had broken down the middle wall of partition between them, and made them to sit together in heavenly places." Before the epistles were written, all these persons had risen above the level of the Roman law to a higher moral realm, wherein Christ swayed a sceptre of sovereignty; unto whom, looking up, they could say, with the voice of a common adoration, in response to his own announcement to them, Thou alone art our master, and ALL WE ARE BRETHREN.

A change so great as this, expressed or implied in every title, formulary, and peculiar phrase of the apostolic epistles, modified at once all the permanent relations of life,— held forth to their view a new doctrine of right, a new standard by which to judge of all the duties pertaining to the connections in which they stood, and new motives of action, drawn from their communion as subjects of a common Lord, and heirs of the same heavenly inheritance. And after they had thus "learned Christ, the truth as it was in him,"— even from the lips of apostles, who had preached to them, like Paul on Mars' Hill, in the days of their very paganism and unregeneracy, that "God had made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon all the face of the earth," * did their case now require a letter of special instruction to inform them that one of their number had no right to hold the other as property,— to exact his toil by

* Acts xvii. 26.

violence, or to bind him by the terrors of the civil law to do service against his own consent, lest silence on this subject should be fairly construed into a divine toleration of the prevailing heathen custom? As well might we suppose that special instructions would be necessary to direct them not to sacrifice their children unto Moloch, or not to fight each other as gladiators, or not to obey the law of the emperor which commanded all faithful citizens to deliver up the Christians to the civil authority. Where the law of the empire was at variance with the law of Christ, who can doubt to which they would yield the supremacy?

That this view of the case is true and just, will appear further, if we consider how greatly a knowledge of the law of Christ modified a Christian's sense of duty touching the other permanent relations of life. It is certainly an error into which many have fallen, to discuss this subject as if, by the law of Rome, *the right of slave-property inhered only in the relation indicated by the words master and servant;* whereas it pertained as really to the relation indicated in the New Testament by the words γονευς and τεκνον —parent and child. Any school-boy may learn the origin of this domestic slavery from the first chapter of Goldsmith's History of Rome. It is clear, not only from Cicero, in his treatise on the laws, but from nearly all the Roman writers, historians, and poets, that every father had the power of life and death over his children — could expose them to death in infancy: and not only so, but a child was not deemed legitimate, or treated as such, unless the father took it formally from the ground, and placed it on his bosom. Hence arose

the phrase "tollere filium"— to educate. Dr. Adam, in his Roman Antiquities, presents the following statements: "Even when his children were grown up, the father might imprison, scourge, send them bound to work in the country, and also put them to death by any punishment he pleased, if they deserved it. Hence, a father is called a domestic judge or magistrate, by Seneca. A son could acquire no property but by his father's consent; and what he did thus acquire was called his *peculium*, as that of a slave.* The condition of a son was, in some respects, harder than that of a slave. A slave, when sold once, became free; but a son, not, unless sold three times. The power of the father was suspended when the son was promoted to any public office, but not extinguished. For it continued, not only during the life of the children, but likewise extended to grandchildren and great-grandchildren. None of them became their own masters (sui juris), till the death of their father and grandfather. A daughter, by marriage, passed from the power of her father under that of her husband."†

In the emancipation of a son from the authority of his father, the law prescribed a tedious process, which the parties were obliged to observe. In the presence of witnesses, before the tribunal of a magistrate, the father gave over his son to the purchaser, adding these words, "*Mancupo tibi hunc filium qui meus est.*" "But as, by the principles of the Roman law, a son, after being manumitted once and again, fell back into the power of his father, the imaginary sale was thrice

* Livy, II. 41.
† Roman Antiquities, 50, 51. N. Y. 1826.

to be repeated, either on the same day and before the same witnesses, or on different days and before different witnesses; and then the purchaser, instead of manumitting him, which would have conferred a *jus patronatûs* on himself, sold him back to the natural father, who immediately manumitted him by the same formalities as a slave. Thus the son became his own master. *Sui juris factus est.* — Livy, VII. 16. In emancipating a daughter or grandchildren, the same formalities were used, but only once; they were not thrice repeated, as in emancipating a son. *Unica mancipatio sufficiebat.*"

Tedious as these processes seem, they were rigidly observed; and there was very little abatement of them until the reign of Justinian, five centuries after Christ. These laws were not a dead letter: the incidental allusions to paternal authority indicate that the severest executions of them were familiar to the minds of the people. Thus Sallust, in his history of Cataline's conspiracy (§ 40), says, "A Fulvius, son of a senator, was taken on the road, brought back to the city, and put to death by his father's orders." In his history of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Gibbon remarks, "The exclusive, absolute, and perpetual dominion of the father over his children, is peculiar to the Roman jurisprudence, and seems to be coeval with the foundation of the city. The paternal power was instituted or confirmed by Romulus himself; and, after the practice of three centuries, it was inscribed on the fourth table of the Decemvirs. In the forum, the senate, or the camp, the adult son of a Roman citizen enjoyed the public and private rights of a PERSON: in his father's house, he was a mere THING; confounded by the laws

with the moveables, the cattle, and the slaves, whom the capricious master might alienate or destroy without being responsible to an earthly tribunal. The hand which bestowed the daily sustenance might resume the voluntary gift; and whatever was acquired by the labor or fortune of the son, was immediately lost in the property of the father. At the call of indigence or avarice, the master of a family could dispose of his children or his slaves. According to his discretion, a father might chastise the real or imaginary faults of his children by stripes, by imprisonment, by exile, by sending them to the country to work in chains among the meanest of his servants. The majesty of a parent was armed with the power of life and death; and the example of such bloody executions which were sometimes praised and never punished, may be traced in the annals of Rome beyond the times of Pompey and Augustus. Without fear, though not without danger of abuse, the Roman legislators had reposed an unbounded confidence in the sentiments of paternal love; and the oppression was tempered by the assurance, that each generation must succeed in its turn to the awful dignity of parent and master." *

But now, to all this antichristian power conferred by the Roman law on the parent, there is not the slightest allusion in the epistles. Is the Christian father there commanded not to kill his son, as he had the legal right to do? Is he told not to sell him? Is he told not to treat him as a slave? Is he urged to manumit him? No —

* Milman's Gibbon, III. 169. Gibbon quotes the Justinian code, saying, Nulli enim alii sunt homines, qui talem in liberos habeant potestatem qualem nos habemus.

nothing of this. Let us ask, in the strain of the writers on slavery, whence this profound silence on these important points of Christian ethics, which must have attracted the notice of the apostles? Is it not clear as the light, that this deeply rooted and organized evil of *filial slavery* arising from Pagan ideas and usages, the apostles thought it expedient to tolerate awhile, but to inculcate broad principles which should work like leaven, gradually extirpate it, and so, in the process of time, raise the members of the Christian family to that dignity of freedom, that security of life, and to that equality of privileges, which were conferred by the Jewish law before the coming of Messiah? Such is the apology to be made for the apostles in this case, according to the reasonings and concessions against which we speak. And is this the best defence which we, as Christians, can urge for the silence of Paul, and Peter, and John, respecting these things? If so, well may they pray from their celestial exaltation, Lord, save us from our friends — shield thou our apostolic character from the imputations of those who are called by thy name and acknowledge our authority.

Thanks be unto God, we are not reduced to the necessity of acquiescing in any such apologies or explanations touching the silence of the apostles on the duty of setting captives or children free. These evils were not written upon, as practical matters, to Christian churches, because, under "the law of Christ," the son needed no emancipation. When that law was received by a family, the son was already free. The father's *right* to govern him, during his minority, arose from his *duty* to guard him in years of

weakness, and to train him up amidst the season of youth, ignorance, and inexperience, "in the way he should go," so that, when old, he would not depart from it. Instead, therefore, of an apostle's writing to Christian churches against such horrible evils as the Roman law entailed on the relation of father and son, or on the right of the son to liberty, or on the duty of emancipation, it was enough, simply to say, "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this right. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first command with promise."* As in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, where his religion had sway, Christianity did not, for a moment, tolerate the filial slavery of Rome, so neither did it tolerate her servile slavery. The silence of the apostles as to emancipation has the very same relation to the one kind of servitude as to the other; and the idea of tolerating slavery, as a system, was not entertained by Christians in early times, until it appeared in company with the most abominable and fatal corruptions.

Not only in the relation of the child to the father, but also in that of the wife to the husband, did the Roman law establish a power adverse to the precepts and the spirit of Christianity. In case of any offence whatever, the husband was the supreme judge, invested with authority to acquit her or to condemn her to death. The law placed her like a slave at his feet, and her life hung on his decree. Observe the testimony of Dionysius Halicarnassensis on this point:—"The law obliged the married women, as having no

* Ephesians, vi, 1—3.

other refuge, to conform themselves entirely to the temper of their husbands.— But if she committed any fault, the injured person was her judge, and determined the degree of her punishment. In case of adultery, or where it was found she had drunk wine (which the Greeks would look upon as the least of all crimes), her relations, together with her husband, were appointed her judges, who were allowed by Romulus to punish both these crimes with death."* This law, of so ancient date, continued to be operative under the empire. Tacitus mentions a case which occurred at Rome, in the year 57, in the reign of Nero:—"Pomponia Græcina, a woman of illustrious birth, and the wife of Plantius, who, on his return from Britain, entered the city with the pomp of an ovation, was accused of embracing a foreign superstition. The matter was referred to the jurisdiction of her husband. Plautius, *in conformity to ancient usage*, called together a number of her relations, and in their presence sat in judgment on the conduct of his wife.† It has often been said, to the honor of Roman chastity, that for more than five centuries not an instance of divorce transpired in Rome; but it is very evident that this fact is to be accounted for, rather from the rigor of the law, which bound the destiny of the wife to that of her husband, than from the superior virtue of the people. There was little occasion for a formal divorce where a husband exercised the authority of an absolute despot, and where an offending wife had no right of appeal from his decision to that of a civil tribunal.

Another feature of the marriage relation, under

* Dionys. Hal. ii. 25. † Annal. xiii. 32.

the Roman government, deserves attention here. Between a citizen and a foreigner there could be no legal marriage,* and the offspring of such a union were deemed illegitimate. They were called Hybridæ or Mongrels, and their condition was very little better than that of slaves. Livy mentions that when the Campanians were forced to go to Rome to pay their taxes, they offered a petition that the children, whom they had by Roman wives, might be treated as legitimate, and made their lawful heirs.† Indeed, this sort of union was not dignified by the name of marriage, any more than was a union between slaves; for in both cases it was stigmatized by the same degrading appellation.‡ Of this firmly established law there was no change until the days of the Emperor Caracalla. During more than two centuries of the Christian era, the children who may have sprung from the marriage of a Roman citizen and a Jew, or a Greek, were denied the rights and honors of a legitimate birth. Paul himself, who was a Roman citizen, declared that he had a right to "lead about a wife" with him; but had he or any one of the Roman converts been pleased to marry a Galatian or a Syrian Christian, the law would, as far as concerned civil rights, have placed the offspring of such a union on a level with the children of a base and criminal connection.

Now, when we consider that the marriage relation lies at the basis of all organized and Christianized society, it may be well to inquire how it

* Non erat cum extenio connubium. Senec. Ben. iv. 35.

† Livy, xxxviii. 36.

‡ Connubium est matrimonium inter cives; inter servos autem, aut inter civium et peregrinæ conditionis hominem, aut servilis, non est *connubium* sed *contubernium*. Boeth. in Cic. Top. 4.

is, that in the epistles of Paul, all of which were addressed to persons living under the Roman empire, no care is taken to guard the churches against the specific evils of this Pagan legislation, which, in the eyes of multitudes, had been embalmed and hallowed by time; had been blended with the very elements of domestic and social life; had been sustained in every age by the most illustrious examples, and had interwoven itself with the earliest remembrances and associations of the civilized world, touching human rights, the fitness of things, and the moral order of the universe. Strange as it may seem to some, no husband, in all the realm of the Cæsars, is told that his wife had been raised by Christianity above the level of her condition under the Roman law. No one is told that the domestic despotism, on which Roman society was based, was an abomination in the sight of Heaven, and that it was a contravention of the original law of Paradise, which placed the man and the woman on the ground of a true moral equality. No Roman citizen is forbidden to scourge his wife for drinking wine! Even her life is left at his mercy; and in all the New Testament there is not issued a single command forbidding a Christian man to kill his wife for any fault which might render her, in his judgment, worthy of death! And yet Christianity arose and spread in a part of the earth where it found the exercise of such power not only common, but where that power was embodied in forms of law, enthroned in the palace, sustained in the prætorium, and revered by public opinion. What now shall we infer from the silence of the sacred scripture on these points? The domestic relations themselves are fully recogniz-

ed, moral precepts are given to all who are united in them; but why are these enormous evils, which affected so deeply the condition of innumerable wives and children, left untouched? Is it that apostolic Christianity, with a wisdom and prudence worthy of all imitation, saw fit to tolerate all these things, being content to teach those broad and mighty principles which, working gradually at the core of society, would achieve its regeneration, after a series of ages, and thus, on grounds of expediency, withheld *from its own disciples* the plain truth of God with a view to ultimate effect? Certainly; according to the concessions of those who have controverted Dr. Fuller, this must be the explanation; but, according to the reasonings of Dr. Fuller himself, Christianity must have intended to sanction the legal powers which these relations had so long conferred, and only to guard against their abuse! But will any man who has become converted to Christianity by reading the gospels, by listening to Christ's own discourses, and by opening his soul to their spirit, remain calmly satisfied with either of these positions? By no means. He will recoil equally from them both. Indeed, Dr. Fuller, in his reply to Dr. Wayland's explanation on this point, writes like a man who could not avoid despising the apostles themselves if they had held back the truth in that way; and with the most of his earnest remonstrance we sympathize to the whole extent of our capacity of feeling. With truth and justness does he say, "The apostles took heaven to witness that they had kept back nothing;" and in addressing, not only the people, but the pastors, who were to teach the people, and bequeath their ministry to their successors, they

asserted their purity from the blood of all men, because they "had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God." Yet they had shunned even to hint to masters that they were living in a "sin of appalling magnitude," and had kept back truth, which, if you are right, was of tremendous importance."

These words must be felt forcibly by those to whom they are addressed; but we thank God that the New Testament presents no such difficulty as that which suggested this appeal on behalf of the apostles. The reason why those faithful guides did not hint to masters that they were living in "a sin of appalling magnitude," was not that slaveholding had been sanctified, but simply because these persons, at the era of their conversion to Christianity, had entered into a new spiritual kingdom, and interpreted all their relations and duties by the light of its heavenly principles, and not by the light of the Roman law or any other human code. Their souls had risen superior to the Roman law, as a guide to duty or a rule of life, as truly as our Christian converts in China have risen above the law of "the celestial empire." Christianity had not yet become corrupted; its public teachers had not quite yet begun to modify its oracles so as to suit a false philosophy, to harmonize with the prevailing ideas of Roman civilization, and so to turn away its disciples "from the simplicity that is in Christ." These first Christians used words which had a weight of meaning in them, when they spoke of their moral isolation from society, when they called themselves "a peculiar people," the subjects of a "new creation," members of "the household of God," "fellow-citizens of the com-

monwealth of Israel,"* and said "the world knoweth us not." The precepts of Christ had taken complete possession of their minds; had not only transformed their theology, but their moral characters, and their social relations. In their view, one sentence of Christ's Sermon on the Mount possessed more moral worth and lively efficacy, than all the lectures of the philosophers, and the laws of the twelve tables put together. Before they took the vows of their profession, they had "counted the cost," and were ready to suffer the loss of all things. As much as in them lay, they obeyed the civil law; but in their lives they "surpassed the laws." So entirely did the word of Christ rule them, that they would not allow the civil law to arbitrate at all on matters which pertained to their own mutual relations. "Dare any of you," says the apostle to some who needed special instruction,—"dare any of you, having a matter against another, to go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?"† Far from availing themselves of any power granted by the civil law to retain their brethren in bondage, their religion forbade them to refer to that law any question respecting their duties to each other.

Now in reading what is written to societies so constituted, it is a great error to infer that the apostles either sanctioned or tolerated any relation between man and man as established by the Roman law, because we do not find in their epistles a particular denunciation of it.

In regard to any such relation which may be in question, the main thing to be ascertained is this: How do the precepts of Christ bear upon it?

* Ephes. ii. passim. † 1 Cor. vi. 1.

These the early churches had acknowledged as their guide; to these they had vowed allegiance. Whatever conflicted with these, they had sworn to abandon, in the very act of their baptism, by which they had owned the sovereignty of the Messiah, in whose kingdom there was no place found for those distinctions of privilege, which, according to the Roman law, pertained to rank, sex, birth, blood, and nationality: "For," says the apostle, "as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ; there is neither Jew nor Greek — there is neither *bond nor free* — there is neither male nor female; FOR YE *are all one* IN CHRIST JESUS." * That legislation which had raised one class above another, on the ground of those distinctions which are here named, primitive Christianity thus heartily renounced, as being incompatible with the law of Christ.

In order to feel the force of this statement, let any one fairly consider what a weight of argument the phrase which we have just repeated, carried with it to the ear of a primitive Christian. "THE LAW OF CHRIST!" In the apostolic age that was no mere abstraction. It was the Law of laws. Its authority was imperial. Its decision was ultimate. In addressing the church of Galatia, Paul said, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil *the law of Christ:*" † thus appealing to it, without citing the words of any precept, he implied that it was well understood. When it was referred to in this way, all knew that the law of benevolence — the law of mutual love — was intended, by way of eminence. The apostle James

* Galatians, iii. 27, 28. † Galatians, vi, 2.

alludes to it in a similar manner, in a passage which contains a warning against discourteous treatment of the poor: "If ye fulfil '*the royal law*' according to the scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well; but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convicted of the law as transgressors." * Our Lord had laid it down, in his early teachings, among the first principles of his religion: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." † The equal love of our neighbor he connected with supreme love to God, and on these two commandments he declared that all true religion depends.‡ But when he proceeds to expound this law respecting our neighbor, what does he teach as to its bearing and extent? Did he imply that it was to be restricted to a particular nation, or rank, or color, or proximity of place? The majority of his audiences, we know, did limit it by their sectional prejudices and national antipathies; but in the parable of the good Samaritan, he taught them that the precept erases these bounds, enjoins love to man as man, our fellow-creature and our brother, and bids us to do good to *all men* as we have opportunity. The Priest and the Levite of his day, who treated such an interpretation with contempt, he pictures to our view in all their native deformity. In addition to this "law of love," he gave another especially to his disciples, enforced by a motive drawn from his peculiar relation to them, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love

* James, ii. 8, 9.
† Matthew, vii. 12.
‡ Matthew, xxii. 37—40.

one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." However a refined and artful criticism may treat such precepts in these days, they were understood by the early Christians in their plain sense, and interpreted according to "the simplicity that is in Christ." A community governed by such laws as these, could never make a man serve as a slave, nor would it be possible for one of them to hold his Christian brother in bondage against his will for a single hour.

Moreover, it may be well to observe, in this connection, that the distinction on which the temporary slavery of Judea had been founded by the Mosaic code was entirely abolished by Christianity: we mean the distinction between Jews and Heathen. The breaking down of this "middle wall of partition" was the great glory of the new dispensation. We know how deeply "the leading men" of our Saviour's generation were offended with his teaching on this point; how bitterly Jewish pride must have scowled upon him, when he said, in allusion to a Gentile's faith, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the *children of the kingdom* shall be cast out into outer darkness." The preaching of this doctrine was a bold feature in the ministry of the apostles; and the mere mention of it, by one of them, caused a crowd in Jerusalem to give vent to their anger by casting dust into the air, and by crying aloud, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live." * Yet these mar-

* Acts xxii, 22.

tyrs to truth were faithful to their trust and conquered by "the word of their testimony." They were true reformers. In founding a new community, they laid, broadly and plainly, the basis on which it was to rest. And as the temporary structure of Mosaic slavery was made to depend on a distinction which it was the design of Christianity to abolish at the very outset, we can easily imagine how abhorrent from the convictions and sentiments of the first disciples must have been the idea of a slave-system in the Christian church.

In exact accordance with these views, is the style and manner of apostolic address in the Epistles of the New Testament. The terms used to designate the relation of master and servant are not those which imply man's ownership of man; and from the terms themselves, the advocate of slavery can prove nothing, because the same and corresponding terms are used in lands where slavery does not exist. The exact import of the term will vary according to the law by which you determine the condition of a *doulos*, or servant: just as it is now in this land; in Carolina a servant means a slave, and in New England it means a freeman voluntarily hired. But how entirely Christianity modified the relation, may be seen by consulting the direction which Paul gave to Timothy, respecting the discharge of his duty as a Christian teacher. It occurs in the 6th chapter of the 1st Epistle, the 1st and 2d verses. Here, no advice is given to the young pastor as to his manner of addressing masters: it relates to servants only. And of servants, two classes are contemplated; first, those who were Christian servants of heathen masters, are considered.

This class is designated by being "under the yoke." "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." This, as Christians, they were urged to do, even though they might be subject to the worst oppression, in agreement with the address of Peter to the same class; "for this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, *suffering wrongfully.*" A heathen master, interpreting the rights of a servant by the light of the Roman law, would be very likely to commit acts of gross injustice; but the precept enjoining a meek endurance of this wrong, for Christ's sake, can, of course, furnish no sanction to the master's continuance of it. But now, in this epistle to Timothy, Paul proceeds, in the next sentence, to speak of a different class of cases; those in which *both* the parties were Christians. And here it is quite remarkable, that, instead of directing masters to treat their servants kindly, he calls upon servants themselves to *beware lest they should* DESPISE THEIR MASTERS! His words are, "And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are *brethren;* but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit." Who does not see that this exhortation arose from the fact, that, when both the parties had come under the law of Christ, Christianity had changed the relation in which they stood — had enfranchised the slave — had made him one of the "brethren" — had invested him with a new dignity and new rights; so that now, instead of the master being under a new temptation to treat the servant wrongfully, there was greater danger lest the ser-

vant should abuse his elevation, should abandon the master's service, or treat him with contempt?

Evidently the style, the letter, and the spirit of these directions to Timothy, indicate a fundamental change which Christianity had wrought in the relation of these two classes of persons, where both had come "under the law" of the new dispensation. They had now risen to that high condition described in the words of their common Lord, "One is your Master, even Christ, and ALL ye are brethren." Violence, or involuntary subjection to bondage, was incompatible with such a change; and now the apostle was chiefly anxious that the parties should not separate from each other, but by continuing together on friendly terms, and, in the discharge of mutual duties, should prove to the world that the law of Christian love is a better cement for society than the law of force. No class of persons had it in their power to afford a brighter demonstration of this, than that of enfranchised servants. If they availed themselves of their acknowledged rights to forsake their old masters, the new religion would be dishonored; if they remained, and yielded faithful service from a principle of love and of religious obligation, Christianity would, through them, reveal its moral and conservative tendency, and would be sure to gain new victories. The appeal which was made therefore to Christian servants on this behalf, has a most important bearing, and proves alike that they had all "been called unto liberty," and that it was expected that the spirit of their religion would dispose them not to "use their liberty for an occasion to the flesh."* If any one deem the case to be other-

* Galatians, v. 13.

wise, just let him imagine how preposterous it would seem for any grave and reverend bishop of our day, or for any public body in the country, to send a message to the young pastors of South Carolina, urging them to teach the slaves of Christian planters "not to despise their masters"! Surely, such a message would sound strangely to the planters themselves; and if it were carried into effect by some obedient Timothy, they would see "the foolishness of preaching," in a new point of light.

The same idea of a change in the relations of these two classes accomplished by Christianity, is implied and indicated by Paul's address to those who belonged to the church of Ephesus.* There he first addresses servants, and urges them to be exemplary in rendering obedience to their masters, for the sake of honoring the cause of Christianity — "as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service to the Lord, AND NOT TO MEN." Undoubtedly, this precept was intended to be as unlimited as that given by Peter (1 Pet. ii. 19), that is, to cases wherein the servant was called to "endure grief, for conscience toward God, *suffering wrongfully.*" However froward or perverse (σκολιος) the master might be, however unjust his demands, the Christian servant was summoned to the exercise of patience and submission, in imitation of Christ, who, "when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously." Of course, Peter did not mean to sanction the wrong; and so, too, in this exhortation of Paul to the Ephesians,

* Eph. vi. 5—9.

he meant to urge the Christian servant to bear wrong meekly, without giving a sanction to the wrong itself. Even if he were subjected to the worst of heathen masters, the apostle wished him to cultivate all fidelity in his service, not on the ground of right or justice, but because God would reward his submission to injustice, if it were exercised in order to promote the honor and triumphs of religion. The specific motive by which the Christian servant is excited to do this, is thus expressed: "With good will doing service to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

But when, in the next sentence, Paul makes a transition, and addresses himself to masters who were Christians, his words are few, but very significant; for, while he tells them to remember that tribunal where there is no respect of persons, he not only forbids their using force in the government of their servants, but even to refrain from *threatening* to do so. He says, "Ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him." In the Greek text, the word απειλην, translated *threatening*, is preceded by the article, and has a more specific sense. Dr. Bloomfield has evidently bestowed some labor on the passage, in investigating the force of the terms; and says (in his Notes on the Greek Testament), that the word, with the article, signifies, "the punishments awarded by the law." This being the case, the precept given by the apostle to Ephesian masters was a direct prohibition

against their availing themselves of power conferred by the Roman law in the government of their servants. It was an explicit command to them to rise above the Roman law in this relation, and to regulate their conduct by the law of Christ, at whose judgment-seat they must stand. But the Roman law being set aside, where could the Christian master find any authority in the law of Christ for holding his brethren in involuntary servitude by means of violence? Such a pretension no man possessing ordinary self-respect, would venture to set up. An intelligent Southerner has aptly said, that the slave system, as it is, may be defended on the ground of necessity, just as war is defended, in some cases, "because the government which it requires is nothing more nor less than a prevalence of martial law." This witness is true; but how a state of martial law is to be maintained by men whose religion forbids them, not merely to remit legal punishments, but even to "forbear threatening," is a problem which yet remains for those Christian casuists who claim the blessed Jesus as the patron of slavery.

The passage in the epistle to the Colossians (iii. 22 — 25 and iv. 1) presents no feature of the case different from that which has already been exhibited. Christian servants were exhorted to cultivate the domestic virtues on those same grounds which have been already suggested. They are bidden to rise superior to the legal relation, and to yield a *voluntary* service for the sake of their heavenly Master, and then follow these spirit-stirring words: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily to the Lord, and *not to men*, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive

the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ." The spirit which glows in the address is abhorrent from the idea that any man had a rightful claim to hold these Christian brethren in an involuntary servitude.

The address which follows to the masters who had become Christians, is, in this case also, very brief. It simply commands them to be just, and to remember their own accountability. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." There is not a free country in the world, and there never will be one, where this precept will not be appropriate and needful.

There is, in the New Testament, another apostolic precept which relates to the relative duties of servants. It is in the epistle to Titus (ii. 9, 10); but its letter and spirit are in entire accordance with those which we have already quoted. This class of persons are urged to make the relation in which they stood a means of advancing the Christian religion; t. do this by so living as to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." In that age of ardent Christian love, the promotion of the cause of Christ was deemed a counterpoise to every evil. No doubt, many of these servants would have gladly continued in subjection to Pagans, if by so doing they could gain new trophies for their Redeemer, just as it has been known that Christians, filled with the missionary spirit, have actually sold themselves into servitude, in order to extend the cause of human salvation. At a period glowing with this holy martyr-spirit, it was common for the friends of Christ to content themselves with any lot 'n which they could promote his glory,

and easy for them to respond to the apostle's appeal: "Art thou called, being a servant? Care not for it; but if thou mayest be free, use it rather: for he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman.*

As an incidental illustration of this state of things which we have been contemplating, it would be difficult to imagine any thing more expressive than the letter of Paul to Philemon. The whole of it is in exact accordance with that condition of the Christian church, which distinguished the apostolic age, when it consisted of scattered communities in Pagan lands, who had come under the law of Christ, and had ceased to determine their duties by the civil law, or to avail themselves of the powers which it conferred, to promote their own worldly benefit by acts of oppression. Onesimus had been the slave of Philemon. He had fled away from his master, and became a Christian, under the ministry of Paul, at Rome. This converted slave the apostle wished to retain at Rome, to minister unto his own necessities; but he did not wish to do it without the concurrence of his beloved Philemon, his "fellow-laborer." According to the law of Rome, Onesimus was still the property of Philemon, who, as a *citizen*, had a legal claim upon all his services; but the letter does not intimate the slightest probability that Philemon, the *Christian*, would or could urge that claim. So far from this, it is distinctly asserted that the relation of the two parties had been essentially changed. How could that fact be more clearly expressed than in the following words: "For

* 1 Cor. vii. 21, 22.

perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him for ever; *not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved*, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?"* This latter phrase effectually guards the interpretation of the letter against that sophistry which concedes that Onesimus was Philemon's brother, considered as a *Christian*, but refuses to extend the acknowledgment of brotherhood to *civil* relations and to common life. It shows that the apostle did not speak of brotherhood in some refined, ethereal, spiritual sense, which had no practical issues, but in a sense which would develope itself in substantial benefits to Onesimus as a *man*, as a fellow-creature possessing a kindred nature, and endowed with the same moral, social, and physical sensibilities as was Philemon himself. Certainly there need be no difficulty in admitting the fact of so great a change, when we see that Paul identifies the happiness and interests of Onesimus with his own, and says to his former master: "If thou count me as a partner, receive him as myself."

Only a single observation further, on this letter, is necessary here; which is, that the object of Paul's writing it, was not to beg for the liberty of Onesimus, but to perform an act of friendship towards Philemon; to awaken in his heart a sympathetic joy over the conversion of his lost servant; and to afford him an opportunity to do his own duty in the case, freely and cheerfully. The first impulse of the apostle's mind was to retain Onesimus, without sending

* Verses 15, 16.

him back at all; but he concluded that it would be most satisfactory, on the whole, to place it within the power of his old Colossian friend to express his own feelings towards Onesimus, as a man and a Christian. Mark the expression of this sentiment: "Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me, in the bonds of the gospel: but without thy mind would I do nothing, that thy benefit should not be, as it were, of necessity, but willingly." A similar phrase occurs in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (ix. 7), where Paul shows them, that, although they were bound by the law of Christ to contribute a supply to the wants of their persecuted brethren, he wished them to do it from a principle of love, and not by constraint: "Every man, as he has purposed in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity." The style of address in the letter to Philemon is analogous to this; for although the law of Christ forbade him to hold his "beloved brother" Onesimus in a state of servitude, by force or threatening, yet Paul deemed it desirable that Philemon should show openly that he was governed by *Christian principle* in this case, and not by a sense of hard constraint, or the awe of an apostolic command.

We have now examined those precepts of the apostles, touching relative duties, on which the advocates of slavery found their argument. It appears to us, not merely that they accord with the position which we have taken on the doctrine of Christianity, but that they cannot be clearly and consistently understood unless they are seen from this point of view. There is one statement of Paul, however, bearing on the whole

subject, which ought not to be overlooked. It is one which shows that Christianity places the crime of man-stealing on the same ground of sinfulness as did the law of Moses. As we have already seen, by that law, it was not only a capital crime to steal a man, but also to have in one's possession a man who had been stolen. Jewish servitude never originated in man-stealing; and if in any house, or village, or town, or community, there had been found a slave-system which owned such an origin, the Mosaic law would have abolished it immediately when that fact had been established. Now, in the opening of the First Epistle to Timothy (i. 10), Paul views the crime thus treated of old in the same point of light, when he classes men-stealers with man-slayers, and perjured persons, and other transgressors of the *divine law*. But all know that American slavery did originate in man-stealing, which even the civil law has denounced as piracy. Those who now hold in their possession the descendants of the first captives, have not, in the sight of God, any more right to their persons as property, than our fathers had to the first captives themselves, whom they purchased from the hands of the bloody slave-dealer, fresh and reeking from the coast of Africa. If the men of the present generation deplore their unsought relation to this oppressive system as a misfortune, — if it be their main anxiety to learn in what way they may set themselves right in regard to it,—the Almighty, it may be hoped, will be long-suffering and forbearing toward their slowness, and will mercifully consider their difficulties; but if, on the other hand, they ratify the sins of our predecessors, and vindicate their own right to posses-

sion by the assumed sanctions of religion, He whose stored vengeance hung over the Ammonites during four centuries, until "their iniquity was full," will in like manner sweep this whole realm of sanctimonious oppression with the besom of desolation, and attest to the universe, by his mighty acts, that "the throne of iniquity hath no fellowship" with heaven.

Neither religion, philosophy, nor humanity, furnish any standing-place whereon a man may press such a claim of right by the plea of prescription. There is nothing in human nature which responds to such an argument, when we bring the case closely home to ourselves. Time was, we know, when in Algiers there were a large number of white slaves, both English and Americans. Suppose, for a moment, that our own government had never succeeded in rescuing our fellow-citizens from that foreign bondage, and that now their descendants, our own relatives by blood and family, had become the inheritance of a new race of owners. What if, on demanding the release of these captives, their lords should meet us with such *Christian* arguments as are found in the letters of Dr. Fuller, should declare to us that they had not had any thing to do with bringing those poor people there, that they had found themselves in a relation of ownership to them, that this had now become a permanent element of their social organization, that slavery had been tolerated by our own holy religion in the Roman empire, and that they now appealed to us, by our regard to order, to justice, to civil claims of property which time had consecrated, and especially by our reverence for the primitive and prudent teachings of that Christianity in

which we so much gloried, that we should show ourselves to be the lovers of peace, and leave them undisturbed, in the enjoyment of those rights with which Divine Providence had so long invested them? Would our friends in South Carolina then be found yielding quietly to the power of these "sacred truths," and paying homage to the intellect of the Christian Teacher who had, by means of them, so wonderfully enlightened the minds of the Algerines? Would not then a single wail, wafted over the waters from a captive boy bearing the name of one of their own families, at once identify his cause with that of the first sufferers, and dissolve this claim to property in man founded on prescription? Would not every one of them feel the decisions of such a question at his pulse? And surely, if this sense of right and justice in us, short-sighted beings, can arouse our souls to overleap a long interval of years, to dispel the misty illusions of time, and to look at things by the simple light of their own unchanging moral nature, let us not harbor the thought that time can consecrate wrong doing, or avert its penalties, under the government of that Supreme Ruler, before whom "a thousand years is as one day;" who has solemnly declared that he will "visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation;" and who declared, through the lips of the Messiah, to the people of Jerusalem, that, unless they abjured the sins of their fathers, they would fall beneath the weight of a woe which had for ages been treasuring up its stores of fatal judgment.

It is with good reason, therefore, that we agree in sentiment with Dr. Fuller when he says,

"Compared with slavery, all other topics which now shake and inflame men's passions in these United States are really trifling."* On this account it is that we feel how unspeakably weighty is the obligation which has, from the first, rested on the American church, to hold forth God's testimony touching the nature of the evil with unwavering fidelity. Dr. Fuller observes that slavery was introduced here "in spite of the protests of the colonies."† But why was this note of remonstrance permitted to die away, and to be changed, first, into soft tones of apology for the system, and at last into the voice of bold and eloquent defence? Had the Christian church been faithful to her mission, the result had been very different. It is a truth, however, that in relation to this subject, the American church has, to a great extent, laid aside the character of a true and faithful witness, and has incurred censures similar to those which are recorded in the second chapter of the Book of Revelation, against the ancient church of Pergamos, for holding back her testimony, in relation to the prevailing system of idolatry. The message there addressed to her, contrasts her early state of purity with that of the first decline of her character. "These things saith he who hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth; but I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak

* Page 3. † Page 131.

to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."

Now, here it is certainly interesting to observe, that, in order to prepare this Christian church for the rebuke which he was about to utter, our Lord shows to them that he was mindful of all the peculiar difficulties with which they were surrounded; that, in estimating the results of a people's influence, he has regard to their place of residence, the state of society on which they operate, and the peculiar forms of depravity with which they may be called to wrestle. Pergamos was consecrated to the Cabiri, a particular class of deities, and so drenched in the slough of superstition that every man and every child seemed to be mad upon their idols. The Athenians were given up to idolatry, but they loved it for its associations with art and genius, and in it they worshipped the beautiful; but the people of Pergamos loved it more for its lower elements, and were more penetrated with its essential spirit. Of such a place it might be truly said, "Satan's seat is there;" for although he is called "the god of this world," although, as we look abroad over the nations, every region bears the insignia of his sway, yet, comparatively speaking, some parts seem to be like tributary provinces; while others, for their wickedness, appear to lie near the seat and capital of his empire. The recognition of this fact in the inspired message which we have here quoted, brings out to view an encouraging truth, that, although our Lord expects much of his church on earth, there is not an obstacle in her path which he has not fully measured.

The spirit of the ACCUSATION, then, against the Christians of Pergamos, may be thus stated, that, although the Most High would make the most merciful allowances for the small amount of results accomplished by the church in that city, he would make none at all for their corrupting the principles of his religion—although he could bear with the small quantity of good influence which they had put forth, he could not bear with the deterioration of its quality. Small success in promulgating the gospel may be charitably accounted for, but to mutilate the gospel itself is a sin which he will visit with condign severity. The message itself gives evidence, that, after the church at Pergamos had resisted her outward foes with a holy and heroic spirit, she was yielding to the influence of those who were ready to accommodate their Christianity to the times, saying that an external conformity to the usages of idolatry was innocent and expedient. Perhaps some of them advanced, in effect, what has since been urged with zeal by the Papists, that the way to win the heathen to Christianity is not to be too rigidly separate from them, but to tolerate many errors for the present, and to turn a participation in the rites and festivals to a good account. The allusion to Balak shows that some of these Christians had already drunk of the "Ammonitish wine," which intoxicated the Israelites, which led them to honor Baal Peor and to forsake the law of God. Their conformity did not stop at the first step; "their table became a snare and a trap," and their spirit of idolatry led to every species of evil. Their destiny, as a church, was involved in their fidelity to first principles. Hence the message sent to them from the isle of Patmos directs its woe against all those who per-

vert the Divine word, or bring down the standard of its principles to the level of their own convenience. That is a great sin, because it destroys the remedy for sin. A single Christian, or a church, may be able to make but little headway against a prevailing custom, against popular opinion, against a badly organized state of society; but every church, every man, and every woman, may hold up a sound testimony, may state the truth of God correctly, and leave the consequence to Him, whether it be to let it work gently like leaven, or to be as the fire and the hammer which breaks the rock of flint.

This remark has respect to the proper treatment of all sins which are called "organic,"—those which are deeply interwoven with the elements of the social structure, as, for instance, idolatry or slavery. Time was when almost universally, throughout this country, men owned slavery to be a sin; that is, a thing which is in itself a transgression of the law of righteousness. Scarcely anywhere could a man be heard to say, that either its commencement or its continuance was sanctioned by reason or scripture. Amidst the agitation of recent years, however, many leading men in the land have deemed the avowal of such a sentiment to be contrary to a safe policy, and have proclaimed slavery to be, not an entailed misfortune, but a righteous relation sanctioned by the Christian scriptures. Now, in this juncture, Divine Providence undoubtedly called the Christian church in the slave-states to a great duty; to proclaim, on the one hand, that she was averse to all fanatical violence, wrath, and strife; and, on the other, that to her, Heaven had committed a pure and free Christianity, which teaches that "God has made of one blood all nations to dwell

upon the face of the earth,"—that the men of Europe or America have no more right of ownership in the flesh and blood of the children of Africa, than the Africans have in theirs; and that, not power, or wealth, or color, can give to man a right of property in man. This testimony she should have held forth with a calm martyr-spirit, seeking nought by violence, but to overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony. But, alas! to a great extent, her ministry and members have succumbed to the laws, the politics, the statesmanship, and the spirit of this world,—have altered the testimony of Christ's word, and have publicly declared that his religion sanctions a system of slavery. If the apostle John, who was inspired of old to warn the declining churches of Asia, could descend from heaven with a special message to this portion of the American church, its "burden" and its tone would probably agree with those of this letter to Pergamos, saying, "I know where thou dwellest, even in the midst of a system which Satan has devised to grind your brethren with hard bondage. I know how little thou canst do to change the laws and customs of this people, and break the bands of oppression; but I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of the devil, saying that this system is from *me*, and that it bears the sanction of your Lord and Master. Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth."

Of such a spirit, we believe, would be the message sent to a portion of our American church, if the oracle of God should illuminate another Patmos. The man who, in the view of the civil

law, is regarded as a slaveholder, but who, in heart, abhors the system, testifies against it as unrighteous, and does what he can to bring it to an end, is guiltless, compared with him, either at the South or the North, who never owned a slave, but who says that Christianity sanctions slavery. The one is the unwilling victim of a system; the other is the voluntary advocate of a principle, which, if true, fixes on Christianity all the guilt of the system itself. The one exerts an influence which tends to destroy the system; the other, an influence which tends to perpetuate it. The one utters a testimony, however feeble, in harmony with the voice of the Bible; the other muffles God's trumpet, so that it can pour forth no note of warning, but only gentle sounds, which soothe rather than alarm the conscience of the oppressor.

As we have said before, the truths involved in this message proclaimed by the voice of inspiration, apply to the church's testimony respecting all organic sins whatsoever,— to all wrong customs which have received the support of society. It will not do for a Christian, or an association of Christians, to say, We cannot alter them, and therefore yield to them. In many things we all may have been subjected to a false system, whose influence we have inhaled like a subtle atmosphere; but at any rate we can testify against it; we can hold forth the law of truth and righteousness; we can make known the word of God, "uncorrupt and pure;" and thus, battling against one and another sin, may keep it from concealing its native vileness by enrobing itself in the authority of religion, and proudly wearing the sanctions of Christ, like stars in its crown of triumph.

END.